

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9338

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USCINCSO

USUN NEW YORK 577

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6953

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PN

SUBJECT: PLANS FOR OCTOBER 11 CELEBRATIONS

1. THE PRESS ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, BELATEDLY BEGAN TO BALLYHOO THE CELEBRATION ON OCTOBER 11 OF THE EIGHT ANNIVERSARY OF THE "REVELUTION".

2. AFTER WEEKS OF BACKING AND FILLING THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA ANNOUNCED THAT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE INAUGURATED IN THE DOWNTOWN PANAMA JUSTO AROSEMENA BUILDING (LEGISLATIVE PALACE). PRESIDENT LAKAS IS LISTED AS A SPEAKER ON THE PROGRAM WHICH HAS APPEARED IN THE PRESS. TORRIJOS IS NOT ON THE PUBLISHED PROGRAM, BUT HE TOLD A U.S. MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER AT 11 A.M., OCTOBER 7, THAT HE WOULD SPEAK AND HE WOULD HAVE SOME ANTI-AMERICAN REMARKS, BUT WE SHOULD NOT BECOME TOO EXERCISED. TORRIJOS, WHO LIKES TO SPEAK EXTEMPORANEOUSLY, IS CAPABLE OF EITHER MAKING THIS PRO FORMA OR OF BECOMING VERY UNPLEASANT. THERE IS EVEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE MIGHT TRY TO AIM A MOB IN THE DIRECTION OF THE ZONE OR THE EMBASSY, PARTICULARLY IF THE ASSEMBLED MASSES SHOULD BECOME OBSTREPEROUSLY ANTI-GOVERNMENT. THE REMARKS ABOUT THE PANAMA CANAL BY GOVERNOR CARTER IN THE DEBATE OCTOBER 6 MIGHT WELL HAVE

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GIVEN THE GENERAL A CERTAIN INCLINATION IN THAT DIRECTION.

HOWEVER, THE ANNOUNCEMENT OCTOBER 7 OF THE IMPENDING RETURN OF THE NEGOTIATORS SHOULD DIMINISH SUCH A POSSIBILITY TO THE VANISHING POINT.

3. THE PANAMANIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE SET FOR THEMSELVES A GOAL OF 70,000 DEMONSTRATORS, BUT U.S. INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES OF THE PROBABLE CROWD RANGE FROM 20,000 TO 35,000. THOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT, MANY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ARE BEING TOLD THAT THEY SHOULD "COME TO WORK", I.E. SHOW UP FOR THE DEMONSTRATION, MONDAY MORNING. PANAMANIAN ARE GIVEN TO TAKING ADVANTAGE OF LONG WEEKENDS TO TAKE OFF FOR THE BEACHES AND OTHER RESORT AREAS. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT MINISTRIES ARE BEING GIVEN QUOTAS OF EMPLOYEES WHO MUST SHOW UP AND THAT IN SOME CASES A ROLL WILL BE CALLED.

4. THERE ARE NO RELIABLE REPORTS THAT STUDENT GROUPS--ANTI OR PRO-GOVERNMENT--WILL TRY TO TURN THE DEMONSTRATIONS TO THEIR OWN PARTICULAR PURPOSES. SOME LEFTIST ANTI GOVERNMENT STUDENTS ARE, HOWEVER, DISTRIBUTING LEAFLETS BLAMING THE GOVERNMENT FOR REPRESSION AND THE HIGH COST OF LIVING. THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE BY ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS, BUT THE NATIONAL GUARD CAN HANDLE THEM IF IT IS SO INCLINED.

5. THE JUSTO AROSEMENA BUILDING IS LOCATED ON THE VERY BORDER WITH THE CANAL ZONE. JUST BEHIND IT IS THE SHALER TRIANGLE--A SMALL SLICE OF THE ZONE WHICH JUTS INTO PANAMA CITY. CROWDS ARE EXPECTED TO GATHER IN THIS AREA, AS WELL AS IN PANAMA CITY IN FRONT OF JUSTO AROSEMENA. THE NATIONAL GUARD HAS ASKED MAJOR GENERAL HAROLD R. PARFITT, GOVERNOR OF THE CANAL ZONE, TO TURN OVER THE PATROLLING AND CROWD CONTROL OF ADJACENT FOURTH OF JULY AVENUE (WHICH IS WITHIN, BUT FORMS THE BORDER OF, THE ZONE) TO NATIONAL GUARD POLICE. GOVERNOR PARFITT HAS AGREED TO A JOINT PATROLLING OF THE AREA DURING THE DEMONSTRATION, BUT WITH ZONE POLICEMEN EXCLUSIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MOVEMENT OF TRAFFIC TO THE TWO ENTRANCES TO THE ZONE CLOSEST TO THE SITE OF THE DEMONSTRATION. THE GUARD ALSO ASKED THAT THE PANAMANIAN AND AMERICAN FLAGS WHICH FLY SIDE BY SIDE ON SHALER TRIANGLE NOT BE FLOWN DURING THE CEREMONIES. THE GOVERNOR IS STILL CONSIDERING THIS REQUEST.

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YM COMMENT: THERE HAD BEEN CONFUSION ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR OCTOBER 11 PRIOR TO THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT. THE DECISION TO HOLD THE CEREMONY IN THE JUSTO AROSEMENA BUILDING RAISES A NUMBER OF INTERESTING QUESTIONS. THERE IS A CERTAIN LOGIC TO IT SINCE THE ASSEMBLY PASSES FOR A SORT OF LEGISLATURE UNDER THE PRESENT PANAMANIAN CONSTITUTION. BUT THE CHOICE OF A SITE CHOCKABLOCK WITH THE ZONE HAS LED TO SPECULATION THAT THE PANAMANIAN AUTHORITIES MAY HAVE AN UNPLEASANT SUPRISE UP THEIR SLEEVES. LAST YEAR THE

OCTOBER 11 CEREMONY WAS HELD IN A LARGE GYMNASIUM COMFORTABLY
DISTANT FROM THE CENTER OF TOWN AND THE ZONE.

7. BEYOND THE STANDARD FARE OF GETTING BACK JURISDICTION OF
THE ZONE, WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TORRIJOS WILL SAY. THERE ARE
REPORTS THAT EITHER TORRIJOS OR PRESIDENT LAKAS MAY ANNOUNCE
SOME NEW TAXES AND/OR A TIGHTENING UP OF THE LABOR CODE--BOTH
OF WHICH WOULD BE UNPOPULAR WITH MOST PANAMANIAN. FORMATION
OF A PRO-GOVERNMENT "MOVEMENT" OR PARTY MAY ALSO BE ANNOUNCED.

8. THERE IS HARDLY A WHIFF OF EXCITEMENT IN THE AIR ABOUT
OCTOBER 11 THIS YEAR. THE GOVERNMENT IS SPONSORING THE
CELEBRATION (DESPITE SOME FEARS THAT ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS
MIGHT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT TO STIR UP TROUBLE) BECAUSE THEY HAVE
NO ALTERNATIVE. NOT TO PERFORM THIS RITUAL DANCE WOULD BE TO ADMIT
THAT THE REVOLUTION HAS LOST ITS SUPPORT.
JORDEN

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